

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

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FOR AMBASSADOR BUNKER

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SECSTATE, INFO AMMAN, BEIRUT, CAIRO,
DAMASCUS, JERUSALEM, JAN 15, FROM TEL AVIV RPTD TO YOU:

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TAGS: PFOR, IS, US, XF

SUBJECT: ISRAELI PRESS REACTIONS TO PRESIDENT FORD'S
TIME MAGAZINE INTERVIEW

1. SUMMARY: MOST ISRAELI PRESS REGARD PRESIDENT FORD'S
TIME MAGAZINE INTERVIEW AS WARNING TO GOI, FORESHADOWING US
DEMAND FOR NEW CONCRETE ISRAELI PROPOSALS TO M
KE POSSIBLE
ACHIEVEMENT OF SECOND STAGE AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT. COMMENTATORS
DEVOTE SPECIAL ATTENTION TO PRESIDENT'S REMARKS RE POSSIBILITY OF
FORMAL US GUARANTEES, WITH DIVIDED OPINION ABOUT THEIR
DESIRABILITY AND LIKELY EFFECTIVENESS. END SUMMARY.

2. REFLECTING CONCERN ABOUT POSSIOLE INCREASED US PRESSURE ON
GOI, YEDIOT AHARONOT EDITORIALIST WRITES THAT "THERE IS NOT EVEN
A HINT IN THE INTERVIEW ABOUT ANY CONTRIBUTION THE ARABS ARE
REQUIRED TO MAKE..."

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3. MAARIV WRITES, "IT IS NOT THE KIND OF BAIT THAT ISRAEL WILL BE EAGER TO TAKE. GUARANTEES, EVEN IF LAID DOWN IN A TREATY, ARE ONLY AS STRONG AS THE STRONGER SIDE'S READINESS TO INVOLVE ITSELF IN WAR FOR THE SAKE OF THE WEAKER." EDITORIALIST CITES SEVERAL EXAMPLES, NOTABLY CZECHOSLAVAKIA WHERE FORMAL GUARANTEES FAILED, AND CONCLUDES: "TOO MANY NATIONS HAVE PAID TOO DEARLY FOR THE NAIVE BELIEF THAT THE AMERICAN FORCES WOULD RUSH TO PROTECT THEM".

4. HATZOFÉ EDITORIAL STRESSES THAT THE REMARK ON THE PREPONDERANCE OF THE AMERICAN INTEREST DICTATES CAUTION ABOUT THE VALUE OF AMERICAN GUARANTEES: "US INTEREST DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT WHEN IT COMES TO IT, AMERICA WILL SEND ITS SOLDIERS TO FIGHT FOR THE DEFENSE OF OVERSEAS COUNTRIES. IN THE AMERICAN INTEREST, PRESIDENT FORD WILL DO WELL TO ALLOW ISRAEL TO HANDLE THE PROTECTION OF ITS EXISTENCE AND PEACE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS OWN UNDERSTANDING AND INTEREST : IN THE END, THOSE INTERESTS WILL PROVE TO BE THE SAME AS THOSE OF THE US. IN ANY CASE, ISRAEL MUST WEIGH ITS INTERESTS: IT WILL HAVE TO RESIST PRESSURE EVEN FROM THE MOST FRIENDLY SOURCE, AND CANNOT RELY ON 'FORMAL GUARANTEES' ALONE..."

5. HAARETZ EDITORIAL, ON THE OTHER HAND, FINDS A POSITIVE ASPECT IN THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS. "SOME MAY REGARD THE GUARANTEES AS A BAIT TO INDUCE ISRAEL TO MAKE GREATER CONCESSIONS. BUT WE HAVE TO ADMIT THAT IT IS AN ATTRACTIVE BAIT.... THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE PROPOSAL, MADE FOR THE FIRST TIME BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE US, DESERVES A POSITIVE EVALUATION. IT CAN ONLY BE HOPED THAT PRESIDENT FORD FULLY REALIZES THAT THE VALUE OF SUCH GUARANTEES DEPENDS ON THE RECIPIENT'S ABILITY TO DEFEND HIMSELF UNTIL THE GUARANTEE IS EXERCISED... THIS PROPOSAL HAS A CONSIDERABLE SECURITY AND POLITICAL VALUE..." HAARETZ ALSO TAKES A FAVORABLE VIEW OF THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS REGARDING THE CONGRUENT INTERESTS OF THE TWO COUNTRIES.

6. THERE HAS NOT BEEN ANY OFFICIAL GOI REACTION. BUT DAVAR (ESHED) QUOTES "CIRCLES IN JERUSALEM" AS SAYING THAT THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT CAN BE REGARDED " AS AN INDIRECT EXPRESSION OF THE DEGREE OF NERVOUSNESS FELT IN WASHINGTON BEFORE THE ROUGH BARGAINING EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT... AND THE DESIRE TO INFLUENCE ISRAEL TO MODERATE ITS POSITION AND CONDITIONS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE...."

7. HATZOFÉ QUOTES "POLITICAL SOURCES IN JERUSALEM" AS SAYING THAT THE "ISRAELI POSITION HAD ALWAYS BEEN THE GUARANTEES WERE A GOOD

THING AS LONG AS THEY WERE ADDITIONAL TO ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN
THE PARTIES IN THE ME THEMSELVES.... GUARANTEES HAD THEIR
ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES, WHICH WAS WHY ISRAEL HAD NEVER
ASKED FOR THEM, BUT THEY WOULD BE A DETERRENT AGAINST INTERVENTION
IN THE ME BY A SUPERPOWER... THE SUBJECT HAS NEVER BEEN
FORMALLY DISCUSSED AT THE TOP LEVEL IN ISRAEL, BUT CASUAL REMARKS
INDICATE THAT ISRAEL WOULD HESITATE TO REQUEST GUARANTEES,
AND THE US WOULD THINK HARD AND LONG ABOUT HOW TO GIVE THEM,
IF AT ALL..." KEATING UNQUOTE. KISSINGER

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